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UNCLAS MANILA 000690

SIPDIS

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SENSITIVE

DEPARTMENT FOR EAP/MTS, EAP/MLS (AARON COPE), IO/UNP (PAUL WICKBERG)

E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [RP](#) [BM](#)  
SUBJECT: DEMARCHE: PHILIPPINES SUPPORTS FAIRNESS IN BURMESE REFERENDUM

REF: A. MANILA 654  
[1](#)B. SECSTATE 26677

[1](#)1. (SBU) Director Maria Elena Algabre-Misrahi of the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) Southeast Asia Division confirmed Qch 17 that the Philippine government strongly supports efforts to make the planned Burmese constitutional referendum free and fair. She listened carefully to our concerns that the Burmese regime's draft constitution may not adhere to internationally-accepted standards for free and fair elections and referenda, as outlined in reftel B. Algabre-Misrahi said that the Philippine government wanted to see serious progress toward democracy in Burma. She noted that President Arroyo's March 9 public criticism of the Burmese junta as well as the comments of Asian and Pacific Affairs Assistant Secretary Romeo Manalo to EAP DAS Marciel March 3 demonstrated the Philippines' ongoing support (reftel A), and that, given the lack of trade and other close ties between the two countries, her government viewed continued public engagement on Burma as preferable to government-to-government confrontation. Algabre-Misrahi added that the Asian and Pacific Affairs Office would welcome the U.S. assessment of UN Special Advisor Gambari's report regarding his March 6 - 10 trip to Burma when it becomes available.

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